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243 412 ploughing. Almost always they used the small wooden plough, sometimes tipped with iron. I have seen a herd of six or eight buffaloes driven around and around over the muddy ground as a method of preparing it for receiving the seed.

As soon as the rain had softened the ground the rice or, more properly, the paddy would be planted by hand, being poked into the ground with a sharp stick. The Karens invented few tools for their work and did not readily adopt those used by other peoples. They 241 weeded with rude hoes, or with sticks and fingers. As the crop matured, they had to fight many varieties of animals and birds. They would construct rude fences of bamboo to keep out wild pig and deer. To protect themselves from the birds they strung small ropes made of various fibres around the field and attached bamboo clappers and later tin cans or anything that would make a noise. It was the duty of the women or small boys to sit in the central hut where they lived during the time of cultivation and pull these strings to drive away the marauding birds which came in large flocks to get their fill of the succulent, newly-formed rice.

251 243 The rice was reaped by hand using a sickle with a long curved handle, and then the grain was beaten out against a bamboo bar fixed to standards set up in the ground. The wind was the winnowing machine. The grain was stored in paddy bins prepared for it until it was needed for supplying the daily table. Often these bins would be located part way between the cultivation and the village site and they were not molested for there [577] is an innate honesty among the Karens that respects that to which they have become accustomed.

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pended on. I have known not a few Government officials who, by such methods, have won the confidence and earnest support of the people with whom they were dealing. It is unfortunate, however, that the number of such officers is not larger. While the Karen have not always been treated with proper consideration and have sometimes failed to understand the aims and methods of the British Government, they are deeply attached to it.

It is true that the Karen are not as quick-witted as some of the other races of the Orient. Nevertheless, they are in some respects out-distancing their more facile neighbors. They excel in the routine of their daily tasks. This is observable in the schools, where the Karen boys usually take the lead in the daily recitations, but make a poorer showing in the written and oral examinations. Several Government officers have spoken in high terms of their Karen clerks, commending their faithfulness and honesty. Not infrequently it happens that such a faithful worker finds that some astute associate has gained the credit and reward that should have been his. The Karen are not blind to disappointments of this sort, as the following fable shows: A man, about to leave home, ordered his pig and dog to prepare a plot of ground for planting as a garden. The pig was industrious and rooted until he had all but finished turning over the plot, while the dog spent his time lying under a tree. Late in the afternoon, before the master's return, the dog jumped up and scratched about here and there in the soft earth. When he heard his master coming, he ran barking down the path to meet him and told him that the pig had been working but a short time, while he had been digging all day. The faithful pig, meanwhile, was so busy rooting in the farthest corner of the lot, trying to finish before his owner's return, that he knew nothing of what was going on. The credulous man believed the dog's deceitful words, killed the pig, and only discovered his mistake when it was too late. This fable is epitomized in the proverb, "The dog scratches in the pig's place." For many a Karen this is all too true.

Early writers speak of the peaceableness, honesty, and goodness of the Karen.[2] There are, of course, in every nation those who belie any statement concerning the people as a whole. However, I have no hesitation in saying that deceit and trickery are not common among the Karen. I have been told by peddlers and others, who often have to carry valuable goods and money into the jungle, that

[2] Sangermano, *Description of the Burmese Empire, 1783-1808*, (Rangoon, 1833) p. 36; Maj. Snodgrass, *The Narrative of the Burmese War*, (London, 1827) Vol. I, p. 142.

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they prefer to spend their nights in Karen villages and do so whenever possible. In the Karen hills the paddy-bins, in which is stored the year's supply of rice, are situated far away from the village along the jungle paths. It is almost unknown for grain to be stolen from them. Among some of the tribes east of Toungoo stealing was punished, until recently, by death. Dr. Mason says that he has never found a Karen who would not lie, if it was to his advantage to do so. This does not agree with my experience.

In various respects, certainly, Karen conduct differs from European conduct. To expect the same standards would be unreasonable. Any fair estimate of the Karen, as of any other primitive people, must take into account the fact that morality with them is group conduct. The behavior of the individual must be regarded in the light of the life and customs of the group to which he belongs. If the actions of the people, considered thus in relation to their own social status, appear capable of betterment, efforts should be put forth to lead the primitive folk to the higher level.

The Karen possess intellectual capacity commensurate with that of other races of Burma. Being subject people in the country, their ancestors were precluded from independent thought and action in essential matters. With the advent of education a sufficient number of the young men and women, though the proportion of the latter is small, has taken collegiate courses with credit to show that they are not inferior to others. The same may be said of many who have won success in practical lines of work. I could name several Karens occupying positions of responsibility that require high mental attainments, who are demonstrating that they are not lacking therein.

The old practice of village communities in exiling widows and orphans to the jungle, and the occasional abandonment of little children by their parents who were attempting to escape from raiders are, happily, things of the past. Fear, the instinct of self-preservation, and superstition serve to explain such phenomena, which must not be taken as indicating that the Karen are lacking in love for children or in humane sentiments. Nowadays orphans find a home without difficulty; widows and aged persons are cared for; parents enjoy their firesides and manifest love for their offspring, with whom they are, in fact, too indulgent, even to their hurt; and young men and women are not above giving tender care to some little niece or nephew.

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623 626 671 867 inhabitants of such a community were without proper guidance in the conduct of their affairs. They were left unaided by the experience of the past. The elders in the properly instructed villages were the custodians of the ancient laws, which they were not supposed to change but were expected to transmit exactly as they had received them.

671 538 577 571 The form in which these laws have been handed down is illustrated by the following saying on love:

"Children and grandchildren, love one another. Do not quarrel; do not find fault with each other. When we are in the village we are separate persons, but when we go to clear the fields we are brethren; and if one is taken sick on the road or in the jungle, we must take care of him. We must look after each other. When we cut the fields we are brethren. If one is sick, all are sick. If one dies, all die; and we must carry his body back to his house and lay it in the hall, that his brethren may see and his wife and his children may see that he is dead."

Other sayings of the elders are expressed in language similar to that just quoted and deal with such subjects as industry, indolence, helping the poor, widows and orphans, evil-doers, duty to parents, humility, swearing, covetousness, partiality, backbiting, hatred, quarreling, falsehood, oppression, theft, exacting fines, killing, famines, etc. Each saying or precept is in the verbose style of the one given above, telling the younger generations what they should or should not do. Dr. Mason has recounted these various sayings at length, as they were reported to him by a member of the Bwe group of Karen tribes. The sayings thus recorded are found to be similar to those handed down among the Sgaw and other tribes. It is worthy of remark that few of the elders on the plains [178] can repeat them at the present time. Dr. Mason's record covers some twenty pages in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, but I shall content myself with calling attention to a few salient points in the precepts.

538 671 577 The one on famines has but little of direct import to say about that specific subject. It reminds the "children" that the elder has seen much of life and its vicissitudes, including fires, floods, plagues of rats, and massacres by Burmans and Talaigns. He has seen one man invite another to a meal, in order to accuse him of stealing his food and thus have an excuse for selling him into slavery. He has seen a bronze drum exchanged for a sheaf of paddy

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and a basket of grain sold for a basket of money. He has seen the people dig unhealthy yams and suffer from eating them. In the last three statements the elder is clearly showing the effects of a great scarcity of grain, both on the price one had to pay for food and on the people who were reduced to the necessity of eating bad food. His reference to fires, floods, plagues, and massacres seem intended to suggest the causes of some of the famines that have come under his observation. Notwithstanding the importance of the subject he is dealing with, the elder addresses no exhortation to his hearers, except by implication.

The precept on indolence is full of moralizing. It condemns laziness and enjoins hard work in order to obtain paddy. It teaches the people to do their work with cheerfulness and gladness, as also thoroughly and well. "We love happiness," says the precept, "and our greatest happiness is to clear our fields and build our houses. Everything is in the earth. Work hard with the hoe to dig it out, and one can buy drums and silver and other things. It is better to work for wealth than to obtain it by raids and forays." This saying overlooks neither the spiritual nor material rewards of labor.

The precept on helping the poor, as well as those on fornication and adultery, contain references to famine, indicating that periods of extreme dearth of food must have been of frequent occurrence among the Karen. Fornication and adultery are dreadful sins because, among other reasons, they produce bad crops and scarcity of game. In times of famine the rich should help the poor, but the obligation of the former to the latter seems to stop there, so far as the sayings of the elders go. The admonition to help the poor is as follows:

"Children and grandchildren, work, every one of you, and be prepared for a time of famine. Then, when a time of scarcity or famine comes, let not the rich and those who have all the rice and paddy reject the poor who have nothing, that you may not lose your honor and be abused, but may be honored and respected. When hard times come and there is famine amongst you, let the wealthy help those who have nothing with which to buy and who can not borrow."

In a similar vein the people are urged to care for widows and orphans lest other countries, hearing of their mistreatment of their helpless ones, shall abuse them and call them poverty-stricken. Even if there are rich men among them, others will not

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their work will not bring success. They will become sickly, weak, and helpless. 671 538 593

The virtue of humility is extolled at length, as one who knows the Karen people might expect. The people are told that he who does not humble himself but exalts himself, who regards his relatives with disdain, makes forays, is extortionate, beats others for nothing, and, in general, does as he pleases, will die young. Such a man will be punished by the Lord of heaven, losing his drums and money, being left wretched and childless, unable to work, without means to purchase anything, and to die without apparent cause. 671 538 576 571 152 789

Cursing is condemned, and its retributive consequences are shown in the story of a man who was the father of ten children and cursed one of his brethren without a reason. The curse did not harm the one on whom it was pronounced, but reacted upon the other, causing the death of every one of his children. Among the other evils denounced and forbidden are covetousness, partiality, backbiting, hatred, quarreling, falsehood, and exacting fines for the infringement of arbitrary rules or for trespass on one's property. The condemnation of such vices, as well as the encouragement of mutual helpfulness, filial piety, generosity to the needy and helpless, and fear of punishment by the Lord of heaven, show that the Karen had no mean standards of personal conduct. Whether these ideals were lived up to or not is another question. In fact, cursing a person by whom one had been injured was a recognized form of retaliation and punishment. It was necessary to go to his house, stand in front of his door, and recite certain verses imprecating him. The person venting his wrath must do this three evenings in succession, taking with him on the third evening an expiring fagot, an addled egg, and the scrapings from the dish out of which the pigs are fed. On this occasion he closes his imprecation with the words: "May his life go out like this dying fagot. May he be without posterity like this egg. May his end be like the refuse of the dishes."

Theoretically, the principle of the old Mosaic law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye was valid among the Karen, but it was tempered in the sayings of the elders as follows: "In order not to subject ourselves to fines and punishment, we must allow others to treat us as they choose. If we are struck, we must not strike again. If one strikes your head, strike the floor. If some one blinds you, do not blind him in return. The long is before; the short is behind [that is, the future is long; the past is short]. Love of 681 627 577

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681 peace gives a wide space; love of evil gives a narrow space. If we
627 want evil, it is present even before all the water has run out of a
577 vessel that has been upset."

The people were warned not to commit fornication or adultery.
684 When they married they were to do so openly. They were told that
671 if they were guilty of fornication, their sons and their daughters
241 would die and the country would be defiled and destroyed on their account. The begetting of illegitimate children was declared to be displeasing to "Thi Hko Mü Xa," the Lord of heaven and earth, and to be the cause of irregularity of the rains, bad crops, failure of seeds and vegetables to germinate, disappointment in the hunt, poverty, and slavery. On the discovery of illicit relations between two of the villagers they were brought before the elders, who required the guilty persons to buy and kill a hog and each of them to dig a furrow in the ground with a leg of the animal. They were then to fill the furrows with the blood of the hog, after which they were to scratch the soil into little holes and mounds while repeating the following prayer: "Lord of heaven and earth, God of the mountains and hills. I have destroyed the productiveness of the country. Do not be angry with me, do not hate me; but have mercy on me and pity me. I now repair the mountains. I heal the hills and the streams with my hands. May there be no failure of crops, no unsuccessful labor, or unfortunate efforts in my country. Let them be dissipated on the distant horizon. Make the paddy fruitful and the rice abundant. Cause the vegetables to flourish. If we cultivate but little, may we obtain but little." When each of the guilty pair had completed this ceremonial, they said that they had made reparation and returned to their houses. In Shwegyin, however, such culprits were driven from the village and required to live outside.[1]

Among the Bwes it was customary to fine adulterers, unless they were single or widowed; but if a wife was involved, her paramour was compelled to pay a fine to the injured husband and take the woman as his wife, the former husband being considered divorced and free to marry again with the money he had received. In case a husband was found guilty of adultery, the woman concerned must pay a fine to the injured wife, who became free to contract another marriage.

[785] If the crops were poor, the villagers suspected that it was due to secret sins of this sort and felt the need of making offerings to

[1] See pp. 192, 257.